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General Assembly

Seventy-first session

Official Records

6th plenary meeting
Monday, 19 September 2016, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Thomson ..... (Fiji)

In the absence of the Co-Chair, Mr. El Haycen (Mauritania), Acting Co-Chair, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

High-level plenary meeting on addressing large movements of refugees and migrants

Agenda items 13 and 117 (*continued*)

Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit

The Acting Co-Chair (*spoke in French*) : I now call on His Excellency Mr. Gennadiy Gatilov, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Gatilov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): There are more than 65 million forced migrants in the world today, which makes the issue before this high-level meeting increasingly important. We share the view that the most reliable way of successfully tackling the refugee issue is to eliminate the root causes that force people to flee their homelands.

We believe that in order to successfully respond to present-day migration challenges, it is above all necessary to politically prevent and settle conflicts. We need to coordinate the efforts of the international community in the political, socioeconomic, humanitarian and other areas and to safeguard safety and security and human rights and forge contacts between humanitarian assistance and development assistance.

We also need to preclude foreign intervention in the domestic affairs of other States. We believe that today's difficult migration situation is largely a consequence of irresponsible intervention in the domestic affairs of sovereign States in the Middle East and North Africa aimed at destabilizing them and forcibly ousting inconvenient Governments. That has caused the collapse of States, humanitarian disasters, civil wars and an increase in terrorism, and has made living conditions there unbearable owing to the threats to human life. All of that, in conjunction with the violation of fundamental human rights, has caused mass flows of refugees and migrants from the Middle East and North Africa. We believe that the States that actively contribute to such interventions must bear the primary and greatest responsibility for delivering assistance to victims, refugees and forced migrants.

We believe that, in order to tackle the migration problems in Europe, there needs to be political agreement in the countries of origin of migrants. There also needs to be assistance for socioeconomic development and State-building. Millions of people need peace, calm and confidence in the future. That can be achieved through civil reconciliation in Syria, Libya and other countries in the Middle East and North Africa and by combating terrorism in that region. We view attempts to promote the concept of responsibility-sharing as an attempt to shift the burden of responsibility to others' shoulders. We stress the counterproductivity of such approaches.

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We would furthermore stress that the Russian Federation supports the international refugee protection regime, at the heart of which is the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. Russia provides political assistance, and we have made donations to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. We provide significant amounts of humanitarian assistance to the countries of origin of refugees. We have also hosted and accommodated refugees in Russia, including more than 1 million forced migrants from Ukraine.

We need to do everything possible to preclude the possibility of foreign terrorists entering countries together with those who actually require assistance. It is inadmissible for refugees to be targeted by political manipulation or by forces stoking religious and social hatred, and especially for refugee camps to be used for the recruitment and military training of fighters. We believe that approaches to overcome migration problems should include providing protection to refugees. Such measures must be in line with the core principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence, and they must also respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States.

We have heard the statements made here by the representatives of Georgia (see A/71/PV.4 B) and Ukraine (see A/71/PV.4 A). Their statements included unjustified accusations levied against Russia. Given the time constraints, I would simply note that the aim of such statements is clear, namely, to shift the blame for the situation in order to justify criminal policies that have forced thousands of people to flee their homes, and to attempt to conceal their unwillingness to undertake tangible measures to remedy the situation.

The Acting Co-Chair (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Yerzhan Ashikbayev, Deputy Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan.

Mr. Ashikbayev (Kazakhstan): Kazakhstan recognizes the global nature of the challenges associated with people on the move and fully supports the leading role of the United Nations in crafting a multilateral strategy to deal with refugee and migration flows.

My country has had its own experience of being a destination for millions of migrants and internally displaced people. Before and during the Second World War, Kazakhstan was a place where various ethnic groups were ordered to resettle. We also experienced several waves of labour migration from other parts of the former Soviet Union resulting from major industrial and agricultural developments. We know the real meaning of humanity and compassion. Thanks to the balanced and responsible policy pursued by President Nursultan Nazarbayev, my country is a dynamic, multi-ethnic society with more than 100 ethnic groups living in peace. That is one of the greatest achievements of our 20 years of independence.

My country has a sound record of collaboration with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). In 2010, we adopted a law on refugees that ensures the protection of their rights and dignity. Refugees enjoy the same rights as citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan. All refugee children are enrolled in quality educational institutions. A national action plan has been put in place to address human trafficking. As a member of the Eurasian Economic Union, we treat migration from neighbouring countries in an inclusive way that contributes to the growth and development of Kazakhstan as well as to the growth and development of our neighbours.

In order to synergize regional and international efforts, Kazakhstan, in cooperation with UNHCR and IOM, initiated in 2011 the regional consultative process called the Almaty Process on Refugee Protection and International Migration. It aims to address the multiple challenges resulting from the dynamics of mixed migration and thereby enhance regional cooperation through dialogue.

We are of the view that the situation in and around Afghanistan should remain the focus of constant international attention. For our part, we are investing more than $50 million in educating Afghan students, building schools and hospitals and providing humanitarian assistance. Together with Japan, we recently helped start a project to improve the nation's civil-service capacity, with a special emphasis on gender equality.

We believe that an effective response to the ongoing humanitarian crisis needs to be grounded in an understanding of the root causes of displacement. Armed conflicts, persecution and violence, climate change and underdevelopment are among the chief factors causing refugee flows. We particularly stress the importance of such principles as mutual respect and non-interference. Neglecting those principles is a factor that contributes to the destruction of the sovereignty

and statehood of affected States and aggravates current humanitarian crises.

We welcome the adoption today of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (resolution 71/1). That document, along with the Secretary-General's campaign to counter xenophobia, is deeply rooted in our universal principles regarding human rights and our commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We hope that it will become a basis for further action and deliver vital changes for millions of people. We also welcome the signing of an agreement between the United Nations and the IOM. Strengthening the institutional relationship between those two organizations is an important element in overcoming the current crisis.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate Kazakhstan's strong commitment and political will to leave no one behind in addressing the issues of migrants and refugees.

The Acting Co-Chair (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Linas Linkevičius, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Lithuania.

Mr. Linkevičius (Lithuania): I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this important meeting. I also thank the representatives of Jordan and Ireland for their tremendous work in facilitating the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (resolution 71/1), which we adopted today.

It is important that that Declaration provides a pragmatic and realistic basis for our collective action in tackling the pressing phenomenon of the mass movements of migrants and refugees. We face the biggest refugee and migration crisis in modern history. No country of origin is able to respond on its own. Only through collective responsibility-sharing can we provide adequate assistance to people in immediate need. Our response must be global, holistic and comprehensive. Saving lives must be a priority.

Decisive action is needed to destroy smuggling networks and break their business models so that we can put an end to their criminal activities. Lithuania's border guards are actively engaged in the European Union (EU) Frontex joint operations, as well as in the rapid border intervention teams deployed on the Greek islands. Lithuanian police are working together with European colleagues in managing migration flows. We have supplied humanitarian aid through the EU civil protection mechanism. However, despite our efforts and goodwill, the phenomenon of mass migration will not be eradicated without responsibly addressing the root causes of displacement.

Conflict prevention, the promotion of good governance, the rule of law and accountability, respect for human rights, job creation and economic opportunities must be at the core of all of our actions. In particular, it is urgent to address the armed conflicts and insecurity that send people fleeing from their homes. The international community should redouble its efforts regarding conflict prevention and mediation as part of peacekeeping. Lithuania remains committed to continuing to contribute to that end.

Refugees and migrants do not need our charity. When given the right opportunities, they will make positive contributions to their host nations. More investment in social cohesion and the full integration of migrants can have significant social and economic benefits for development. We need to strengthen our efforts by including initiatives especially focused on women and youth in order to offer them the opportunities they need to fulfil their potential.

In conclusion, let me express the hope that 2016 will stand out as the year when we stepped up with responsibility-sharing and not responsibility-shifting. We hope that this high-level meeting will provide historic opportunities to improve the lives of millions of people. We must not fail them. Furthermore, we look forward to acting on our commitment to develop global compacts on the topic by 2018, another important milestone in developing a clear framework for a global response and enhanced international cooperation.

The Acting Co-Chair (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Shaw Kgathi, Minister of Defence, Justice, and Security of Botswana.

Mr. Kgathi (Botswana): I bring greetings from the people of Botswana as we prepare to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of our independence on 30 September. I am greatly honoured to address the General Assembly on the matter of the large movements of refugees and migrants taking place across the globe.

I am aware that this issue has become increasingly urgent, distressing and life-threatening, particularly for those who are affected, especially women, children and persons with disabilities. I have had an opportunity to appreciate the outcome document of

this high-level meeting to address large movements of refugees and migrants. Let me commend Member States for the excellent work put into the development of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (resolution 71/1), which was adopted this morning. My delegation and I support the proposed migration survey programme, which I believe will generate a clearer understanding of the demographics of migration and the large-scale movement phenomenon.

In general, poor governance structures and the resulting social inequalities, poverty, military conflict and disasters are often significant causes of the large movements of persons. For its part, Botswana has played a role in providing refuge to asylum seekers by affording protection and dignity for all those displaced from other Southern African countries and broader sub-Saharan Africa during the liberation struggles in the early 1960s. Botswana currently hosts 2,123 refugees. My Government, in collaboration with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, provides protection in terms of shelter, health and public education. Like all countries, Botswana is doing its best in terms of the development and implementation of protection policies consistent with the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees to insure that refugees live their lives in safety and dignity.

Migration and the movement of people across the globe require regional, continental and, above all, global consensus to solve the problem. The current trends in migration require that Governments and multinational organizations meet to collectively resolve matters and pool resources together so as to assist the United Nations in its efforts to come up with sustainable solutions to those problems.

It is regrettable to note that the global security environment remains volatile and that all countries are at risk when it comes to terrorism. The continued threat of terrorism across the globe, the economic downturn and the harsh climate-change patterns are individually and collectively leading to increasing pressures on the economies of developing countries in particular. The effects of those pressures are reflected in many parts of the world in rising unemployment, especially among youth, food insecurity and poverty, all of which are often implicated as the primary causes of the migration and displacement of persons across the globe.

My delegation and I believe that the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, supported by a global peacebuilding effort and a global campaign against terrorism, will provide the necessary impetus for slowing down the migration and large movements of persons and refugees across the globe. My country stands ready to support all endeavours in that regard.

The Acting Co-Chair (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Milenko Skoknic, Director General for Foreign Affairs of Chile.

Mr. Skoknic (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): Chile endorses the report of the Secretary General (A/70/59), which states that the global crisis caused by the mass movements of migrants and refugees demands an urgent response by the international community in order to create lasting solutions in the medium- and short-term and ensure the full enjoyment and exercise of all human rights by refugees and migrants. That response should recognize the multidimensional nature of the phenomenon of international migration with all its political, economic, social, humanitarian and developmental ramifications. In that respect, we should remember the commitments made in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the principle of leaving no one behind.

Chile has not been spared; over the past 10 years we have become a country of migrants. Our official figures show that through 2015, 500,000 migrants were received in our country, mainly coming from Latin America and the Caribbean, with women representing a large share of that number. Thus far in 2016, that process has continued in a dynamic way. In order to respond to that challenge, our Government has worked on designing and implementing a migration policy based on the promotion and application of our commitments in terms of human rights. We have established a council for dealing with migration affairs at the ministerial level, whose mandate is to define a comprehensive national policy on migration. We have developed a presidential instrument that includes guidelines for a policy to strengthen our legislation and practice on migration. The end goal is to generate a national system that gives a multidimensional response to the migration processes in the country.

With regard to refugees, Chile reaffirms its commitment to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. Our

Government, with support from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, has launched an initiative for the resettlement of Syrian refugees. That effort involves services and support that take into account the special needs of children, families, women and persons with disabilities. The initiative is based on our successful experience in dealing with refugees starting in 2008. We have so far granted certificates of naturalization to 45 Palestinian children, who have been resettled with their families. Regionally, especially through our participation as a non-permanent member of the Security Council in 2014 and 2015, we have strengthened rapid humanitarian access for providing humanitarian assistance to communities affected by humanitarian crises.

Chile supports the Nansen Initiative and its agenda of protecting displaced persons across borders in the context of disasters and climate change. Regionally, we have promoted the concept of international migration governance through the South American Conference on Migration as well as through other regional integration processes.

Lastly, we hope that this meeting will help us find innovative solutions aimed at providing assistance to displaced persons and refugees. Chile joins other United Nations Members in supporting the instruments agreed upon by the Organization and the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (resolution 71/1), adopted this morning, which establishes a framework for effective global cooperation on the basis of solidarity backed by our renewed commitment to international humanitarian law.

The Acting Co-Chair: I now call on the representative of New Zealand.

Mr. Van Bohemen (New Zealand): New Zealand welcomes the timely report of the Secretary-General on refugees and migrants (A/70/59) and its call for a new and comprehensive framework to address large movements of refugees and migrants.

The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (resolution 71/1) that we adopted this morning is a critical step, but it is only a first step. Innovative solutions and agreement on concrete outcomes are required. We must look to greater and earlier investment in conflict prevention and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to address the root causes of the current unprecedented flows of irregular migration.

As we have heard today, mass movements of vulnerable people cause untold disruption, despair and devastation for individuals, communities and countries, for the refugees and as the recipient communities which absorb them. The challenges are complex and multifaceted, and we have a shared responsibility to manage irregular migration flows in a collaborative and comprehensive manner, with full respect for international law.

New Zealand is committed to doing our bit. We will continue to work with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the international community to find protection solutions for the most vulnerable people and to resettle refugees under our refugee quota programme, the size of which we are increasing.

In our own region, New Zealand is committed to strengthening cooperation and the capacity to address irregular migration, in particular through the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime.

In March, ministers endorsed a landmark Bali Declaration. It acknowledges the growing scale and complexity of irregular migration challenges and aims to reinforce regional long-term strategies, dismantle criminal human trafficking and smuggling syndicates, and expand legal, safe and affordable migration pathways.

In the Pacific, the potential for future climate-induced migration is of real concern. New Zealand has endorsed the Nansen Initiative on disaster-induced cross-border displacement and the Platform on Disaster Displacement.

New Zealand will continue to play our part as we work towards the adoption of global compacts on refugees and migrants that are meaningful, ambitious and based upon legal obligations and standards, and which harness the key commitments on forced displacement made at the World Humanitarian Summit earlier this year.

We will also do our best in our remaining months in the Security Council to spur the Council to take more effective steps to address the crises in Syria, Libya, South Sudan and elsewhere, which to a very large extent are driving the problem we are discussing today.

The Acting Co-Chair (*spoke in French*): I now call on the representative of Cambodia.

Mr. Tuy (Cambodia): At the outset, I wish to express our wholehearted appreciation to President Peter Thomson and to the President of the General Assembly at its seventieth session, Mr. Mogens Lykketoft, for having convened this important high-level plenary meeting on addressing large movements of refugees and migrants, as per resolution 70/539. It symbolizes the collective effort by the international community to secure commitments for assistance and to strengthen closer cooperation and more responsibility-sharing.

Refugees, migrants and movements of people are not a new phenomenon. They are an integral part of human history. Today's global trends have grown negative, and refugees and migrants are daily subject to discrimination and xenophobia. They are frustrated and are often the victims of emotional or psychological trauma. Responses to large movements of refugees and migrants have been minimal, since we seem to be reluctant to address them, partly because of the diverse political interests involved.

I believe that the more we leave them to endure suffering and challenges, the more we will bear the negative impact of the problem, as we can see heart-breaking images in the media, including footage of the exodus of refugees and their rejection by States.

Every year we observe International Migrants Day on 18 December, which indicates that these issues have become international. It is recognized that collective efforts are necessary that involve Member States and all Government and non-governmental partners.

While we are thinking about the current outflow of refugees and migrants, we should look at the root causes of their forced displacement from their countries of origin, including countries in conflict, or else we will fail to address the problem permanently. In this context, political commitments should be at the forefront, followed by the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies.

My delegation advocates the way forward as outlined in the outcome document (resolution 71/1) adopted by Heads of State and Government and high representatives, in particular in the context of the intergovernmental negotiations that will begin in 2017. This would lay a good foundation for reviewing today's comments. We have to ensure that we do not wind up this meeting with commitments alone, without a path laid down to realize our goals.

In this sense, my delegation is confident that international cooperation is the only way forward. The outcome document, or New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, that we have adopted here today will serve as a catalyst for our collective commitments, translated into action along the lines of the basic principles of international refugee law, human rights law, humanitarian law and responsibility-sharing measures.

Three decades ago, owing to civil war, Cambodia had an outflow of refugees, and in July 1979 the then Secretary-General of the United Nations convened an international conference in Geneva on refugees and displaced persons in South-East Asia. The decision of that conference successfully averted the immediate crisis through what amounted to a three-way agreement between the countries of origin, the countries of first asylum and the countries of resettlement, while the ASEAN countries promised to uphold their commitment by establishing regional centres. We take this opportunity to thank the United Nations, its Member States and relevant organizations for assisting and resettling Cambodian refugees and their voluntary return to the country through an integration process.

Given the emerging trend of refugees and migrants, we can understand the suffering involved and the refugees' need for resettlement based on their will.

Refugees and migrants do not always create problems in the countries where they have found sanctuary. They contribute to the development of an economic and social impetus in the countries in which they live by contributing to the work force.

My delegation notes with interest that Member States have come together to address the burning issue of refugees on a wide scale. We look forward to the implementation of the proposed comprehensive response framework, which would form a solid basis for establishing a more coordinated approach and more equitably addressing the enduring refugee crisis as well as future large-scale movements of refugees.

In a nutshell, refugee and migration issues should be dealt with through systematic expanded settlement schemes involving the provision of educational skills, ability skills and capacity-building opportunities, as well as mobility, family reunions and other pathways to integration into society.

For its part, the Royal Government of Cambodia is committed to strengthening global governance of migration. We therefore warmly welcome the agreement to bring the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the leading global organization on migration, closer to the United Nations as a related organization. We look forward to the implementation of the agreement, which will assist migrants and help Member States to address migration issues more comprehensively and holistically and will promote greater coherence between migration and related policy domains.

Cambodia also requests IOM to provide technical and secretariat support for the negotiations on developing the future global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration and for the intergovernmental conference to adopt it in 2018. That includes appointing the IOM Director General as the secretary general of that international conference in 2018.

I wish to conclude by expressing our hope that refugees and migrants will receive greater attention, regardless of their origin or their cause for fleeing, as they are bound to experience suffering. That will definitely be in accordance with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as it will leave no one behind, including refugees and migrants.

The Acting Co-Chair (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Igor Crnadak, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Mr. Crnadak (Bosnia and Herzegovina): It is my great pleasure to take part today in this high-level meeting dedicated to addressing large movements of refugees and migrants. The initiative to organize this summit meeting comes at a time of unprecedented human mobility.

We have witnessed refugees from regions engulfed in armed conflict flooding into Europe. We are all part of the story, whether or not we so intended. It has caused unparalleled tensions among neighbouring States, which has resulted in the construction of barbed-wire and tall metal fences between European countries — something that we believed was a feature of an earlier time. We have witnessed the Schengen Area system abruptly suspended. We have witnessed international railway lines and motorways — the blood vessels of the continent — suddenly closed down. That reflects the importance of today's topic on the international community's agenda. Forced displacement, with its complex, challenging nature, requires not only a humanitarian response, but also a sustainable political solution.

Displacement severely impacts not only individuals and families, but also entire host communities and countries, while introducing an additional element to the phenomenon, namely, a challenge to development. Current approaches to the large-scale movements of displaced populations, internally displaced persons, refugees and asylum seekers have proved inadequate and unsustainable. They have also ignored the need for an improved sharing of the collective responsibility for such populations.

Last year, we adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which was a major step in dealing with one of the main root causes and drivers of the flight of both migrants and refugees. As is well known, the lack of development can be both a trigger for conflict and a driver of people to leave their country in search of a better life. The 2030 Agenda is linked to migration and refugee issues, as it recognizes the importance of addressing forced displacement as a part of sustainable development. Although Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 10.7 is focused on migration, other SDGs focus directly and indirectly on matters related to migrants and refugees, all with a single objective, namely, to leave no one behind. For the millions of displaced persons, refugees and internally displaced persons, not being left behind translates into the ability to return to their homes or to be better integrated into the host community, or settled elsewhere if necessary.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development clearly recognizes the positive contributions that migrants make. Beyond receiving humanitarian assistance and protection, forcibly displaced people must be able to benefit from and contribute to sustainable, long-term development. That will require a rethinking of our operational, policy and financing instruments and approaches at the national, regional and international levels.

As a global phenomenon, migration requires global attention — our attention — since no State can deal with the issue alone. The migration patterns of today have become even more complex, with some people moving permanently and others moving temporarily. Many leave to escape poverty, violence or conflict or

in the aftermath of natural disaster or environmental change.

The first-ever World Humanitarian Summit, which was held in Istanbul earlier this year, provided an opportunity to all stakeholders involved in humanitarian issues to join together around a table to discuss approaches and demonstrate decisive and sustained leadership in several very important parts of the agenda, not the least of which related to the issues of forced displacement. It was a moment for us to act that generated the energy that has been transferred to the present moment. It is therefore important to note that, together with the 2030 Agenda, the Secretary-General's Agenda for Humanity (A/70/709, annex) offers an additional blueprint for change.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina we all agree that migrants and refugees differ in various ways and are regulated by various laws. However, it is important to tackle both issues together in the sense that both categories face similar challenges during displacement and upon arrival in the destination countries. We believe that migration and development issues require greater focus, as do the ways and means of assisting the countries of origin.

Today we have a historic opportunity to commit to addressing the root causes of large movements of refugees and migrants as the cornerstone of our future joint efforts. However, we must also continue sending clear messages that barbed wire, walls, heavy police control and isolation build animosity between neighbouring countries, and therefore have no place in Europe. It is easy to stand behind European values when things are running smoothly and without any problems. We must not forget that refugees choose Europe not only because it offers economic opportunity, but because they view our values as a foundation for their future.

By putting the issue of migrants and refugees at the centre of our agenda, especially the most vulnerable among them, namely, women and children, and, more important, by adopting a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration in 2018, we will deliver the goal of leaving no one behind.

The Acting Co-Chair (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Anis Birou, Minister for Moroccans Abroad and Migration Affairs of Morocco.

Mr. Birou (Morocco) (*spoke in Arabic*): How can we transform fear into hope? How can we transform the choice of a hazardous journey into a choice in favour of life? How can we safeguard the dignity that a migrant or a refugee enjoyed before becoming a refugee because of a war?

Today's meeting represents a political commitment. It is an ethical commitment made for migrants and refugees on the part of all countries. It is a commitment to provide hope and the trust that the humanitarian values we share have not died. The international community must therefore translate them into acts and deeds. We expect action, as that is the way to fight ignorance, violence, racism and xenophobia.

My country, Morocco, has become a stable country after being a transit country. It has provided hope to tens of thousands of refugees, thanks to the vision of our King. My country has adopted a migration policy that is based on human rights, a humanitarian approach, comprehensive values and shared responsibility. It calls for an international approach to migration. The policy has been transformed into a special programme to assist tens of thousands of refugees from several countries, especially from sub-Saharan Africa.

We have also adopted a comprehensive integration programme. It is structured with a focus on providing education to all refugee children. It provides not only education, but also support so as to ensure their success in school, and they benefit from full medical services. We have provided technical programmes and have followed up on those and other programmes. The policy has also provided a comprehensive toolkit on legal matters. Our Parliament has adopted laws on human trafficking and on migration. Our policy also focuses on humanitarian considerations for the benefit of all vulnerable refugees.

Based on its principles and values, the Kingdom of Morocco stresses the need to continue that policy. We also believe that migrants make various contributions to our society, which we highly appreciate. However, my country is deeply concerned about the increase in xenophobia in several host countries, which could increase the suffering of migrants and aggravate self-identification problems.

Morocco is aware of the negative repercussions of climate change. We will therefore ensure a focus on the matter during the climate change conference to be held in Marrakesh in November.

In conclusion, we welcome the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (resolution 71/1). Morocco has focussed on refugees and migrants through the adoption of various laws. We will spare no effort to ensure a successful 2017-2018 co-chairmanship, along with Germany, of the international Global Forum on Migration and Development.

The Acting Co-Chair (*spoke in French*): I now call on Her Excellency Ms. María Andrea Matamoros Castillo, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Honduras.

Ms. Matamoros Castillo (Honduras) (*spoke in Spanish*): About two months ago, a young mother from northern Honduras, struggling to raise her beautiful daughter Jennifer, who was just 12 years old, took the regrettable decision to entrust both of them to a human trafficker, who assured her that now was the time to reach the United States, before an impenetrable wall was built. Filled with false expectations, they left their home and community on a Thursday morning to set out on an irregular migration route. As soon as Saturday, while crossing a river, their raft capsized, and Jennifer lost her life on her birthday.

That is an irreversible tragedy for the family, for Honduras and for humankind more broadly. How is it possible to identify those responsible for what happened, or even the main cause? How can we stop the loss of life on irregular migration routes or prevent people from falling victim to human traffickers or being exploited as they seek better opportunities or flee from violence? Were Jennifer and her mother culprits or were they victims?

The answers are complex and, in attempting to provide them, it must be recalled that migration is not just a passing phenomenon. It is a reality that has always existed and will always exist. Migration is a fundamental and necessary right of human beings, and in large part, as the Director General of the International Organization for Migration rightly stated (see A/71/PV.3), it is not a problem that we should try to resolve but one that we must urgently address.

It is not a question of halting migration, but of eradicating the causes of forced and irregular migration. It requires considering migration from the perspective of global opportunity and development, not of fear. In that regard, Pope Francis has invited us to look at migrants not only in terms of their situation, whether regular or irregular, but essentially as people whose dignity must be protected and who can contribute to the welfare and progress of all.

However, we cannot take full advantage of the benefits generated by cultural exchange, while people continue to undertake dangerous irregular migration journeys, if we do not offer better opportunities for those who are forced to leave their countries. In that regard, we must promote regular, orderly and safe migration, while opening the door to temporary workers, which can be of benefit to both migrants and the countries concerned. We must combat drug trafficking by addressing pre-production and consumption aspects. We must share intelligence and efforts to combat organized crime in all its aspects. We must protect the environment but also ensure resilience to its effects. We must respect the best interests of children and the rights of families. Moreover, we must call for an end to violence, condemn war and the violation of human rights and urge all countries to welcome and protect migrants and refugees, while continuing anti-discrimination efforts.

But let us do that together. We must assume our responsibility and understand that our actions as isolated countries will never equal what we can achieve by working together towards the same goals. An example of that is the Alliance for Prosperity in the Northern Triangle, a partnership among Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala, supported by the United States, which recognizes the responsibility of the member countries for regional migration. The Alliance has identified the main causes of irregular migration and has the commitment of the four countries to generate the necessary opportunities for developing the region, thereby dampening the urge on the part of the populations to go north.

This year, Honduras allocated $1 billion from its national budget to programmes and projects identified by the plan, thereby shouldering its responsibility and achieving significant reductions in irregular migration from Honduras.

However, to date more than 120,000 Honduran citizens have been detained and returned by the United States to Mexico as they tried to travel north in 2015 and 2016, averaging about 6,000 people per month. Those figures take on a different significance when we realize that each number represents a human life — more than 120,000 human stories, hearts, hopes and dreams that are, for the most part, tragedies.

It is no coincidence that we are gathered here today. It is in our hands not only to adopt the decisions that we have before us, but also to implement them, while leaving aside debate and taking action to depoliticize and humanize the migration issue. Above all, the saving of lives, like that of Jennifer, is in our hands.

The Acting Co-Chair (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Faustin Archange Touadera, President of the Central African Republic.

President Touadera (*spoke in French*): Throughout the world, large movements of people have almost become the norm, particularly in Africa, given the extent of that phenomenon on the continent. Such movements all have the same root causes — conflicts, man-made disasters or nature's whims, to put it simply. Large movements of refugees and migrants have always affected countries of origin and destination. My country, the Central African Republic, was for a very long time a land of asylum for refugees and other migrants from neighbouring countries and the rest of the world.

The main consequence of the most recent crisis has been the massive displacement of people within and outside of our country. We recorded as many as 900,000 displaced persons during the crisis. Thousands of women and children were driven out of their usual place of abode, which had immeasurable repercussions on their physical and mental health. Hundreds of families were torn apart, and hundreds of businesses were abandoned. The future of thousands of children was placed in jeopardy, and the dreams of an entire country were shattered.

Large movements of refugees and migrants do not foster development; instead, they foster insecurity, suffering and the loss of dignity. They have undermined economic efforts and led to instability in my country.

Today, in the aftermath of that complex, deep-seated crisis, the Central African Republic, after the restoration of constitutional order, has made a decisive turn towards national reconciliation.

The international community should assist all countries in general, and African countries in particular, in combating the root causes of large movements of refugees and migrants, as stipulated in the Action Plan of the 2015 Valletta Summit on Migration. That Plan also makes provisions for, inter alia, reducing poverty, promoting peace and governance, and providing opportunities.

I take the opportunity offered by this forum to thank the international community for the multifaceted support given to my country during challenging times. I call for the Action Plan be implemented so as to enable African countries to prevent conflicts and man-made crises and reduce the risks of natural disasters. That support should also help Governments in their efforts to implement strategies to return refugees, because post-conflict States are generally weakened and the non-return of refugees or a poor return strategy could spark yet another conflict.

The Acting Co-Chair (*spoke in French*): I now call on Mr. François Beya Kasonga, Director-General of the Office of Migration of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Kasonga (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): It is a great honour to take the floor on behalf of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo at this summit meeting on addressing large movements of refugees and migrants. Our country has ratified all of the conventions relevant to protecting refugees, and it respects international law, refugee law and the principle of non-refoulement. Since its independence, it has opened its doors each time to groups of people or individuals who request asylum in its territory.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo has paid a heavy price for hosting some of the largest communities of refugees in the world — more than 2 million Rwandan refugees in the middle of the 1990s, following the 1994 genocide in Rwanda; hundreds of thousands of Angolans during their struggle for independence; the wave of South Sudanese refugees while that country struggled to gain its independence; and, more recently, because of civil wars in those countries, thousands of Burundian refugees, thousands of Central African refugees and refugees of other nationalities. Parts of our land were devastated when armed groups from foreign countries entered the country, and local populations suffered retaliation at the hands of those armed groups. Economic development was crippled by the impact of the thousands of refugees, and security remains a major challenge in the east of the country.

In the wake of such events, the large-scale internal displacement of almost 2 million people has become part of the landscape in certain areas of the country.

That has caused the flight of 500,000 of our fellow countrymen and women, who are now refugees abroad. Moreover, we have noted that the principle of shared responsibility in responding to such large movements of refugees and internally displaced persons has not been respected by the international community. I might recall that it was the international community that ordered a humanitarian corridor to be opened to facilitate the entry of refugees and armed men.

The lack of funding prevents the implementation of sustainable solutions with regard to repatriation, the local integration of refugees or the viability of the areas to which the refugees and internally displaced return. Because of that regrettable experience, the Democratic Republic of the Congo welcomes the global response framework for refugees advocated by the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (resolution 71/1), adopted by this summit to respond to large-scale refugee flows and the protracted situation. We commend the fact that this framework brings together all stakeholders as well as local and national authorities and underscores the duty to respond to the needs of the local host communities.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo supports those commitments, including the provision of greater support for countries and communities that host the largest numbers of refugees. As noted during the crisis involving European countries, the responsibility can no longer be shouldered solely by the African host countries. That is in line with the 1951 Refugee Convention, signed in Geneva, which stipulates in its preamble that international protection cannot be effective without States sharing responsibility for the burden caused by hosting thousands of people on their territory. That is why the Democratic Republic of the Congo calls for the genuine and effective implementation in African countries with limited resources of the principles concerning protection for refugees and assistance to host States. It is a common responsibility to be shared by the international community.

The Acting Co-Chair (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Mahmoud Ali Youssouf, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Djibouti.

Mr. Youssouf (Djibouti) (*spoke in French*): Let me begin by thanking the Co-Chairs for convening today's high-level meeting on addressing large movements of refugees and migrants in an international environment marked by protracted crises.

Concerns about mass displacements of populations have occupied an important place on the international community's agenda for a number of years. Those movements present an urgent global challenge, to which our responses should be pragmatic, balanced, coordinated and comprehensive, while always maintaining strict respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. The unprecedented scale of the problem, which the International Organization for Migration (IOM) assessed in 2015 at 244 million migrants and refugees worldwide — a 41 per cent increase since 2010 — demands our collective and urgent mobilization, particularly since the issue's impact on national discussions in the political, social and security arenas is undeniable.

The General Assembly has already met twice in order to make a serious effort to tackle various aspects of the issues relating to international migration. I would like to recall that in 2006 our discussions revolved around the establishment of the Global Forum on Migration and Development as a mechanism for informal dialogue. In 2013 we adopted the Declaration of the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, which laid particular emphasis on respect for human rights and international labour standards, while reaffirming our commitment to fighting both human trafficking and racism and intolerance. Those aspects are more relevant and topical than ever.

In 2015, we made some significant progress with the adoption of texts and action plans that lent the issue of migration universal scope. Our efforts reached a further decisive stage on 25 July, when we worked together to adopt a resolution that affirmed the International Organization for Migration's integration into the United Nations system. Today we took an equally important step in adopting, for the first time, a framework for action that includes specific commitments regarding refugees and migrants and that is also aimed at ensuring that migration can be safe, orderly and regular.

Despite the fact that the various causes of such large-scale movements have been identified and are universally recognized, the international community is still dealing with many difficulties in preventing or managing them effectively. We stand by, powerless, before the recurring images in the media of shipwrecked migrants and refugees attempting journeys that are

often fatal, especially for the most vulnerable of them, particularly women, girls and children, victims of the sordid greed of criminal networks. Beyond the traditional dichotomies between developed and developing countries, between rich and poor, this is, at bottom, about our humanity, compassion, solidarity and indignation in the face of crises so tragic that the effects are reminiscent of the fratricidal wars that led to the creation of the United Nations.

Since 1977, the Republic of Djibouti has continued to host many refugees from neighbouring countries who have been compelled to flee the horrors of war or the devastating effects of drought. Despite our limited resources, we have never failed to offer the traditional welcome, hospitality, humanity and impartiality that are the founding values of our society and culture.

Djibouti understood very quickly the scale, complexity and duration of the humanitarian crises in the Horn of Africa, and it was in that spirit that we acceded early on to the relevant international instruments, such as the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1969 Organization of African Unity Convention on the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa. We have done the same with regard to regional initiatives, such as the European Union-Horn of Africa Migration Route Initiative, known as the Khartoum Process, and the African Union-Horn of Africa Initiative on Human Trafficking and Smuggling of Migrants.

In 2010, Djibouti was also among the States that brought to the General Assembly the African Union's decision to adopt a comprehensive action plan to combat human trafficking. Furthermore, together with other States of our subregion, in 2014 my country subscribed to the Addis Ababa Commitment towards Somali Refugees, committing to assuring Somali refugees asylum space for as long as necessary and improving the quality of asylum, while working to find solutions to their plight. With four camps, Djibouti is currently hosting almost 20,000 people, of whom just over 17,000 have refugee status and 3,000 are seeking asylum. Recently, in the opinion of the most senior officials of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Djibouti was the host country with the highest ratio of refugees to its land area.

The effectiveness of the national response depends upon a proper understanding of the kind of assistance that should be provided to people entering the country for various reasons but with the same need for protection. Over the years, we have developed and consolidated a support system under which the rights of refugees are respected, while ensuring that they have decent living conditions in the camps. The system also ensures that the groundwork is eventually laid to provide opportunities that will help refugees integrate into Djibouti society.

As a haven of peace in a troubled region, over the past few years my country has also been dealing with a increasing number of economic migrants travelling to the Gulf States, estimated to be close to 100,000. Many of them would have died without our coast guard, which has gone to the rescue of makeshift vessels in distress. Between March 2015 and July 2016, Djibouti became one of the few escape routes for foreign nationals and people fleeing the fighting in the neighbouring country of Yemen, and we took in almost 36,000 people.

A few days ago my country strengthened the system of protection for those with refugee status by enacting a supplementary law designed to strengthen the legal instruments already in force in the Republic of Djibouti for the protection of refugees and asylum seekers. It will also enable refugees to enjoy the same civil, social, economic and cultural rights as citizens of Djibouti.

The Acting Co-Chair (*spoke in French*): I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Anamaria Diéguez Arévalo, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Guatemala.

Ms. Diéguez Arévalo (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to begin by commending the Co-Chairs on the discharge of their duties during today's high-level meeting on refugees and migrants.

The delegation of Guatemala is participating in this meeting in the firm belief that we need to conduct a dialogue, exchange knowledge and arrive at consensus in order to address this important issue. We have high expectations for the concrete results that we hope to see from this high-level debate when it comes to addressing the issue of large movements of refugees and migrants. All of us here realize that we have an opportunity to reach consensus through frank dialogue, and we wish to take advantage of this meeting so as to ensure that the issues that we are discussing are addressed at the highest possible political level and that genuine, applicable and urgently needed decisions can be taken.

Guatemala is aware of the pressing problems facing refugees and migrants, who are people seeking

better living conditions, people forced to leave their lands, homes and loved ones. For Guatemala and the other countries of Latin America, migration is a vital issue that can certainly not be ignored, owing to the enormous scale of migration movements.

There are two different issues, equally important but very different in their treatment. That is why we convened a meeting in Costa Rica on the new challenges of migration and displacement. We have noted that distinction and stated our disagreement with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, which considers all migrants to be refugees.

The Guatemalan migrants seeking a better life in the United States are not the victims of State political persecution. They are not being persecuted, nor are their lives in danger. They want a better life. If one analyses the regions where Guatemalan migrants originate, in the north-east region, there are no problems, so we cannot say that those people are fleeing violence in their places of origin or that that is why they are migrating. They want to join their families and they want their children to have opportunities. That is why we must establish a clear difference here, because we see that those two issues are being considered together in this high-level dialogue.

We are very much aware of the serious problems besetting European countries with large-scale migratory movements. But that does not mean that we in Latin American countries see things in a different way. We reiterate our commitment to the need to work and coordinate with other nations, both regionally and subregionally, so as to address the challenges of international migration, which is an unavoidable phenomenon today. We therefore need to create those conditions that ensure that our citizens do not feel that they have to leave their countries to find a better life. The resources and opportunities for better living standards must be in our countries.

As my colleague from Honduras already stated, we have a plan for prosperity, for providing funds. We need to work together in our State institutions so that we can focus on lining up cooperation in all those municipalities from which migrants come. Unless we improve the living conditions in those communities, we cannot address the problem of migration. We have to provide real answers to migrants. We have to provide opportunities for safe, orderly and regular migration. That must come through the expansion of legal ways to migrate in order to prevent human trafficking.

The Government of President Jimmy Morales Cabrera has asked the United States Government four times for help in that area, and we have not received it, not in this election year. Nevertheless, during the coming elections, we will continue to insist on such assistance, because we are the only Central American country that has not been granted it. It is necessary for us to change the rhetoric so that we can achieve more, while also abandoning the idea that migration is a problem that we have to confront. It is rather a challenge that we need to address. Migration is the right of all persons, and therefore an opportunity that should enjoy the protection of the State.

In fact, migration must not be linked with negative behaviour. We need to find the right responses, and we must dispense with the mistaken perceptions that link migrants with refugees, drug addicts or terrorists. Migrants set out on a journey to find a better way of life when their own countries do not offer it. They migrate today because they feel they need to, because they cannot find solutions to their problems at home, including a better life, and because of the economic opportunities in other countries.

Refugees, on the other hand, leave because of adverse political conditions or because of natural disasters or other causes that are not necessarily economic but make it impossible for them to remain in their countries of origin, which is the case for those groups that we have mentioned. Each of us, individually and in a coordinated way, must change that situation, and we need solutions that guarantee that safe, orderly and regular migration can prevail.

If only the United States were to implement the comprehensive migratory reforms that President Obama has prepared, but which for political reasons were not carried out. We are certain that if comprehensive migration reform and a programme for temporary workers were implemented, the immigration problems in our countries would see great improvements. Migrants add to our societies; they do not take away from us. As societies, at one time we appreciated and recognized the value that migrants added to us. They also provide knowledge and bring with them different worldly skills from those we have. With regard to special protection for our children, we must definitely avoid having children held at detention centres while

determining their migration status, which is clearly against the best interests of the children.

Guatemala believes that migration must be addressed using a comprehensive, humanitarian approach based on international cooperation and coordination and on shared responsibility. Our migration policies ought to be progressive, without restrictions. We ought to ensure that there is no xenophobia, discrimination of various kinds or racism. Such attitudes must be things of the past. No single country has generated a solution. It is high time for us to pull together in a serious effort to develop the coordination and exchange of information needed to provide the appropriate answers in a timely fashion.

The Acting Co-Chair (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Mobashar Jawad Akbar, Minister of State for External Affairs of India.

Mr. Akbar (India): I thank the Co-Chairs for convening this meeting on an issue that has continued to make headlines over the past years.

Although much of the push for these deliberations comes as a result of the more immediate impact of the refugee crisis in certain parts of the world, the problem itself has been with us for a very long time. The phenomenon of refugees is as old as war. The first consequence of war is death, the second is refugees. There is another kind of person seeking a new haven, the migrant driven by a second cruelty — hunger or economic aspiration. Both phenomena are visible in the present crisis. One driving force may seem to be the result of compulsion and the other voluntary, but both involve some form of compulsion.

To put the contemporary problem in perspective, the number of people on the move globally is estimated at nearly 250 million, or 1 in every 30 persons. That level is unprecedented. Refugees are currently estimated to number approximately 20 million, about 1 of every 12 persons on the move. Three quarters of the refugees come from just 11 countries, while 7 countries host more than half of all refugees. A fact that may surprise a few people is that almost 90 per cent of all refugees are hosted in developing — or as I prefer to call them, emerging — nations.

There is a long history of large communities seeking refugee in my country, India, which offers refuge not because it has a large bank balance but because it has a large heart. I recall vividly, when I was a young person, just getting ready for my first job, in 1970 or 1971, when our neighbour Bangladesh was fighting for its independence, that more than 1.2 million people from that country took refuge in India from the genocide they were facing. We have long experience with that, and we have developed situation-specific responses for each such instance. People seeking shelter in our country have never been turned back. Our record in that context is actually unique.

There is one point that I want to make, however. It is assumed that only host nations do not want refugees. I ask, do refugees want to become refugees? They do not. We must understand this and underline it, and therefore find out what drives them towards seeking refuge. Prevention is better than cure; perhaps prevention is the only cure. Preventing armed conflict, countering terrorism, building and sustaining peace, and facilitating sustainable development and governance will prevent people from being forced to leave their homelands.

India engages regularly with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. For many years, India House has partnered in the significant work being done by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

In a way, all of us are migrants for one reason or another, but perhaps principally economic reasons, seeing as the human race originates from Africa. More recently, most nation-States and societies have been built upon waves of migration of various ethnic groups over the past centuries. This has been in many ways a positive development. Migration has continued to expand, now aided by the integrated economies of the past few decades. Nationalism is the contemporary architecture of stability, and we understand its importance. The intersection of human need in a refugee crisis and national imperatives make this a complex situation.

India has been both a destination and a transit country for a large number of migrants. Our own historical memories recall great migrations in the nineteenth century, due to famine and because the colonial Powers of the time wanted another form of labour after they abolished slavery in favour of so-called indentured labour. Coincidently, this year marks the 100-year anniversary of Mahatma Ghandi's seminal contribution to this crisis when he campaigned for the release of refugees in indentured labour in South Africa, and this practice was abolished altogether. In fact, in many

senses India's liberation and freedom movement begins with the elimination of indentured labour.

Our intense civilization has witnessed an ebb and flow that have been built on successive waves of migration throughout history, comprising traders, soldiers, missionaries, communities escaping persecution, and artists, academics and artisans seeking better opportunities. Indian traders and missionaries have also settled on distant shores and along the spice routes. In more recent times, Indian migrants, including a broad cross-section of professionals, small entrepreneurs, skilled and less skilled workers, have migrated to various countries around the world and offered a positive contribution to the diaspora.

Our Government focuses on the entire range of issues relating to Indian emigrants, especially those with lesser skills. India engages actively in facilitating the mobility of professionals under the General Agreement on Trade in Services Mode 4 of the World Trade Organization, and in issues relating to the equivalence of education and professional qualifications to taxation. We look forward to engaging with all partners, beginning next year in the development of a global compact for a safe, orderly and regular migration that is in the interests of all.

However, it is important to stress that today the geopolitics of the crisis point to terrorism and prove that it is the principal cause of refugee movements. Can we ignore this fact? We cannot. We do so at our peril. Terrorism is an existential threat, and hypocrisy towards this crisis will not do. There is no good terrorism or bad terrorism, and if we do not know the answer to this question then we need only ask the refugee if he considers any terrorism to be good or bad. I wish to stress that terrorism is the biggest danger to human rights. Ultimately, large movements of people across borders serve as reminders that our world has become a global village. We can only prosper or perish together. It is best that we learn to live in peace, prosperity and amity.

The Acting Co-Chair (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli, Minister of Interior of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Fazli (Islamic Republic of Iran) (*spoke in Farsi; interpretation into English provided by the delegation*): Allow me at the outset to express my sincere appreciation to the Co-Chairs of this very important and timely meeting on large movements of refugees and migrants. I wish them every success. We have high hopes that the outcome of this meeting will ensure effective steps towards solving one of the major problems facing the international community.

In addition to economic and social gaps and natural phenomena such as droughts and natural disasters, the root causes of human crises and large movements of refugees and migrants include foreign intervention and occupation and terrorism, as well as the destabilization of legitimate Governments, especially in recent years. The international community's lack of success in reducing and reversing these factors has resulted in ongoing displacement. We must pay due attention to the root causes of such crises, in addition to assisting refugees and displaced persons.

Large movements of refugees and migrants have effects and implications beyond national borders, and a single country alone cannot overcome them effectively. A collective response of international cooperation is therefore needed. This meeting will provide an opportunity to adopt a global approach towards the issue of refugees and migrants so that all countries can take full responsibility vis-à-vis such movements in origin, transit and host countries.

Due to its geographical position, for more than three decades the Islamic Republic of Iran has faced a massive influx of millions of refugees and displaced persons from neighbouring countries in challenging circumstances. During this period, the Islamic Republic of Iran has refrained from closing its borders. On the basis of its religious and humanitarian teachings and above and beyond its international commitments, it has accepted large numbers of these people. Despite very limited international support and being burdened by the conditions of an imposed war and unjust sanctions, the Islamic Republic of Iran has shouldered the heavy burden of this presence to the highest possible standard.

We have provided people in need with different kinds of services, including free education at all levels from elementary to higher education, health care and job opportunities. Such assistance goes beyond our commitments under the 1951 Refugee Convention. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, over the years the literacy rate among the refugee population residing in Iran has increased from an initial 6 per cent to over 67 per cent. All refugees, in one way or another, enjoy remedial services. Meanwhile, the implementation of the fifth phase of health insurance for all refugees with special

diseases and people in vulnerable situations is under way.

Having hosted a huge refugee population in protracted situations, numbering more than 3 million in some periods, the Islamic Republic of Iran has consistantly faced the heavy economic, political and social burdens of that presence. It is our conviction that any new commitment made by host countries should conform to their national capacities and legislations. Prior to that it is necessary for the rest of the international community to undertake new and additional commitments to refugees and host countries through a well-defined mechanism. We also renew our call to the international community to take the necessary measures to solve the refugee problem through sustainable voluntary repatriation and resettlement.

I wish to conclude by expressing the hope that this meeting, in a collective effort and through the constructive interaction of all representatives, will take viable and effective decisions aimed at resolving the problems and reducing the suffering of refugees and displaced persons.

The Acting Co-Chair (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Yemane Gebreab, Senior Political Adviser to the President of Eritrea.

Mr. Gebreab (Eritrea): Eritrea played an active role in preparations for this high-level meeting because we believe that the topic under consideration is an issue of vital importance for all peoples and nations of the world. In Eritrea's view, our goals must be the following.

First, we must agree on the need for and importance of legal, safe, and regular migration and provide meaningful avenues for it. It is really incongruous that in an increasingly globalized world where much is done to advance the movement of goods and finance, human mobility is stridently opposed and vehemently blocked. This needs to change, as much of the current crisis and suffering could be significantly reduced by means of safe and ordinary migration.

Secondly, we must protect and promote the rights and dignity of all migrants and provide them with opportunities for education, skills training and jobs, without which they cannot lead a life of dignity.

Thirdly, we must address the main perennial drivers of migration, including forced migration, which are growing global inequality, poverty, lack of development and violations of fundamental freedoms, as well as wars and conflicts, and take cognizance of other significant drivers such as demographic and climate change.

Eritrea believes that every nation has the primary responsibility to provide a safe, secure and dignified life for its citizens in their own country and to enable them to pursue opportunities in other countries. However, nations, and in particular developing nations, need support and solidarity to address the daunting challenge of ensuring peace and sustainable development. Meaningful global efforts are required to make our world more equal, fair and just. The propensity to seek unilateral economic, financial and trade advantages at the expense of developing countries; the resort to violations of international law and national independence, territorial integrity and sovereignty; the pursuit of power politics; and the imposition of unjustified pressures and sanctions must be firmly resisted.

On the issue of migrants, care must be taken to refrain from exploiting their plight and sufferingfor the purpose of targeting select countries for political ends, with disregard for humanitarian considerations.

Given the fate of previous summits and solemn declarations, including on migration, it is understandable that many are sceptical about the outcome and impact of this gathering. It is therefore imperative that in the national and global arenas, at the level of Governments, national institutions and regional and international organizations, we all shoulder our responsibility to end the suffering associated with migration, to protect and promote the rights of migrants, and to welcome human mobility as an integral and desirable feature of our globalized world.

The Acting Co-Chair (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Abelardo Moreno Fernandez, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba.

Mr. Moreno Fernandez (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Over the past two years, we have seen shocking images showing movements of desperate people crossing the Mediterranean en route to Europe, as a direct consequence of the destabilizing actions of NATO in the countries of the Middle East and North Africa, and of the underdevelopment and poverty that prevail in countries of the African continent.

There has been a movement of almost 2 million people, including 260,000 this year, through August. It

is overwhelming to learn that more than 30 per cent of these are children and that many of them have travelled alone, that 17,000 disappeared between 2015 and May 2016 after setting foot on European soil, and that 3,166 had died or been lost at sea as of last August. This figure is already close to the 3,770 such deaths registered for all of 2015.

Those primarily responsible for these movements must shoulder their responsibility for the humanitarian disaster created. Those who have escaped and are escaping from poverty and conflicts triggered by others cannot now be treated as criminals at the borders of the civilized countries that they attempt to enter or regarded as de facto criminals or potential terrorists.

These mass arrivals will not be held back by criminalizing them, building high border walls or holding camps, or by creating administrative or even military barriers. It is also incongruous that those who refuse to provide shelter today forget that many of their citizens needed protection in other countries during the two World Wars. Dealing with this increasing number of asylum-seekers and refugees requires a genuine commitment to international peace and security on the part of the major industrialized countries, which must forgo their hegemonic interests. It is also necessary to substantially change the unjust and exclusive international economic order. It is equally vital to address the reasons why millions of people emigrate every year, risking their lives in search of higher standards of living and increased well-being.

Migratory movements will persist if the 836 million people currently living in extreme poverty or the 795 million people who are starving, mainly in the third world, continue to be doomed to these plights. Moreover, why does the developed world close its eyes to the substantial contribution made by migrants to its current standard of living, while migrants are the victims of economic, cultural and social discrimination?

International cooperation is therefore vital so as to ensure genuine dialogue and cooperation that recognizes the shared responsibility of all States for migration and to ensure respect for the sovereignty and equality of States and other fundamental tenets of the Charter of the United Nations, as well as the integrity, dignity and well-being of migrants. However, some States act in a way that runs counter to this sort of cooperation.

An example is the so-called Cuban Adjustment Act and the wet-foot, dry-foot policy implemented by the United States against Cuba. Moreover, the Parole Program, still being blatantly used, promotes brain drain by encouraging health workers to leave their country, in a sector that is so important to Cuba and also in terms of the cooperation provided by my country to the peoples of the world.

Mr. Lungu (Zambia), Acting Co-Chair, took the Chair.

The Adjustment Act provides Cubans with preferential migratory treatment worldwide; they are automatically admitted to the United States even if they arrive in an irregular manner, in violation of bilateral migration agreements intended to ensure legal, safe and orderly migration. The wet-foot, dry-foot policy ensures the implementation of the Cuban Adjustment Act in connection with migrants who manage to land on United States soil, while those who are intercepted at sea are returned to their country of origin. While migrants are victimized, fall prey to gangs of human traffickers and are exposed to risks to their personal safety, the policy creates difficulties for transit countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, a group of which officially requested that the United States Government repeal the policy. Such policies encourage human smuggling and irregular migration directly from Cuban territory and third countries, including Cuban citizens who travel abroad legally. They have led to death and misfortune and discriminate against migrants from every country.

This meeting will produce tangible results only if commitments are entered into to strike at the root causes of migration and refugee flows, efforts are made to do more than just contain such movements, and solidarity and cooperation are strengthened.

The Acting Co-Chair: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Lubomír Zaorálek, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic.

Mr. Zaorálek (Czech Republic): From the outset, I would like to say that I know that migration is a natural process. Many times in the course of history, migration has triggered progress and development, but it is also true that migration is not always positive option. Too often, it is a forced solution with negative impacts on migrants, as well as the States of origin, transit and destination. Moreover, the nature and scale of the current migration crisis are as global and far-reaching as they have ever been. I wish to thank the Secretary-

General for convening this meeting because the Czech Republic is in the heart of Europe and fundamentally interconnected with its neighbours, and thus it feels strongly about the issue.

Our common and ultimate goal should be to improve living conditions worldwide so that everyone can live a decent life in their own country. Addressing the root causes of migration in the countries of origin must therefore be the cornerstone of our global efforts to tackle this crucial challenge of our time. We must put fundamental values and principles at the core of the solution to those root causes of migration.

Respect for the principles of good governance, the rule of law, protecting human rights and the fight against corruption is an essential prerequisite for ending massive outflows of people from the most affected crisis regions. However, those values and principles cannot be imparted from the outside. It is first and foremost up to the Governments and countries of origin to make them a reality. Without that, no other global efforts can be really effective.

I also need to stress, however, the crucial issue of security, because security is by no means excluded from this overall picture. There is a clear threat of infiltration of migration flows by violent extremists, which we need to address thoroughly. The rights to protection for migrations and refugees have to be balanced with the rights of receiving countries in order to ensure and maintain their security. While committed to assisting refugees, we stress the negative impact of migration flows on host and transit countries. If Europe is to maintain its ability to provide security as well as inspire democracy, freedom, the rule of law and respect for human rights worldwide, it must protect itself. In other words, the values and legal frameworks of the host and transit countries need to be respected by all migrating persons. Migration must carry on in an orderly and well-controlled manner at a speed allowing for the vital but complex task of properly absorbing and integrating incoming people.

To regulate the volume of migration, we have no other choice but to prioritize. We must clearly distinguish between refugees, on the one hand, and, on the other, migrants and economic migrants, who do not qualify for international protection. That can and must be done with full respect for the human rights of all migrants. Particular attention should be paid to the issue of forced migration, including internally displaced persons (IDPs). The number of IDPs is much higher compared to persons who have been forced to migrate across the border. Furthermore, those who embark on the journey abroad are often young and strong, compared to IDPs, among whom so many vulnerable groups are represented.

Addressing the root causes of large movements of refugees and migrants is a key but long-term ambition, but we cannot leave these issues for the long term. We have to act on the most pressing issues now. With migrant flows at their current level, we must urgently deal with them today. There are win-win answers to the migration challenge, and our obligation is to seek them out. Only if countries of origin, transit and destination work together side by side can a lasting solution be found, including streamlined global possibilities for legal migration and exchange. I hope that our meeting today will constitute a significant contribution to this global effort as we work together.

The Acting Co-Chair: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Ahmed Barwari, Head of the Department of International Organizations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for Iraq.

Mr. Barwari (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): I am pleased to participate in this high-level plenary meeting to address large movements of refugees and migrants. I thank those friendly countries that have helped Iraq and our people, in particular our refugees and migrants.

The causes of migration are manifold. They may be economic, social, academic, political or induced by armed conflicts. Migration can result from the absence of freedom of expression and the oppression of creative people, scientists and intellectuals in governmental institutions, transforming cultivated people into refugees. Those factors combined with others can drain countries of minds and human resources that represent the true infrastructure of economic and social development in any country. In addition to the demographic change caused by migration, it also destroys social structures. On the other hand, we must not disregard the positive effects of the what is called the brain-drain migration, which engenders creative interaction among cultures and mutual benefits from diverse experiences.

Human trafficking and smuggling networks play a major role in this phenomenon. These networks either seek financial gain or to implement their political agendas. Terrorism is among the main causes of

forced migration. My country is a notorious example of the effects of terrorism perpetrated by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIS) and other terrorist organizations, causing millions of people in Iraq to migrate. When the terrorist group ISIS infiltrated Iraq and gained control over several cities in June 2014, our Government faced the major challenge posed by large flows of migration and the displacement of innocent civilians fleeing their homes to safer areas.

Despite the economic and security challenges that Iraq has faced, leading to internal displacement, my country has never shut the door on our brother Syrians fleeing terrorism. In fact, we have hosted more than 250,000 Syrian citizens since the beginning of the crisis in Syria.

Terrorism and migration are interrelated. They are a global concern that goes beyond the borders of one country. No country alone, no matter how economically strong it may be, can contain all refugees of the world. No country, no matter how big its security and military capacity, can face terrorism alone. I therefore call on the international community to stand by Iraq in facing the dangerous phenomena of terrorism and migration by taking the following steps.

First, we need support for psychological rehabilitation programmes for women and girls — especially Yazidi women and girls — who have been raped and disgracefully and inhumanely abused by ISIS in Iraq. Secondly, civil servants in ministries and displacement and migration institutions must be trained to provide the necessary assistance to refugees. We also need support in finding a solution to the problem of refugees and asylum-seekers. Thirdly, donor countries must accelerate the delivery of international assistance in order to see to the needs of Syrian refugees and displaced people in Iraq. We call on countries to provide medical, psychological and social assistance to the victims of human rights violations. We hope that all host countries, including those that host Iraqi refugees, will do their utmost to integrate Iraqis into their society and protect their dignity.

We stress the right of Palestinian refugees to return, and we call for a just solution to their plight, in line with resolution 194 (III) and in line with the Arab Peace Imitative. We also call on countries to provide the necessary support and assistance to Palestinian refugees, through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, with a view to protecting their dignity.

The Acting Co-Chair: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Antonio García Revilla, Director-General for Multilateral and Global Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Peru.

Mr. García Revilla (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): Today's meeting provides us with an excellent opportunity to show that we are actively committed to protecting the rights of all refugees and migrants. We must urgently work together to protect the human rights of these vulnerable groups through a global approach to sustainable development, to which we have dedicated such effort to within our societies.

Among the major challenges before us, we need to take the measures required to combat human trafficking, among other related crimes, and be mindful of human rights when reviewing border management and detention policies. Furthermore, in the current crisis, we must counteract discrimination and xenophobia against migrants and refugees by fostering their inclusion and effective integration into our societies. It is also paramount that we focus on providing equal access to health services, education and decent work for refugees and migrants. In this regard, Peru is committed to working closely with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

On the issue of migration, we believe that it is time for greater cooperation at the global level and to recognize and ensure the human rights of all migrants, regardless of their migration status. It is vital that our national plans for development include actions that create more opportunities for safe, orderly and regular migration, with due respect for basic human rights.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development gives particular importance to migration and human mobility, which are recognized as a globalphenomenon and a key factor of sustainable development. In this regard, it is considered to be a multidimensional reality that is especially relevant to countries of origin, transit and destination, to which it contributes to inclusive growth and sustainable development. Peru actively shares this vision and is committed to its implementation. Addressing the issue of migration is one of the pillars of Peruvian foreign policy. We have improved our multifaceted approach to migration and adopted a national policy on migration management.

We believe that this meeting will mark a turning point that makes a difference in the lives of many refugees and migrants. We hope that by the end of the year, the General Assembly at its seventy-first session and the Security Council will reach a consensus and implement guidelines and specific policies that all Member States should implement urgently.

The Acting Co-Chair: I now call on His Excellency Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State of the observer State of the Holy See.

Cardinal Parolin (Holy See): The Holy See expresses its gratitude to the President and the Secretary-General for convening this gathering of global leaders to address one of the biggest humanitarian, political, social and economic issues of our time.

The enormous and complex challenges posed by immense movements of refugees and migrants can be solved only if we all work together. The Holy See insists on the need for cross-border dialogue and cooperation among nations, international organizations and humanitarian agencies. In this regard, partnership with religious organizations and faith communities is particularly helpful, as they are interested and skilled parties who are often first responders to refugee and migrant movements across borders, as well as to those of internally displaced persons.

The Holy See wishes to reiterate once more its urgent appeal for political and multilateral efforts to address the root causes of large movements and forced displacement of populations, especially conflicts and violence, countless violations of human rights, environmental degradation, extreme poverty, the arms trade and arms trafficking, corruption and the obscure financial and commercial plans connected to them. At the same time, it is necessary to ensure that development funds are equitably and transparently assigned, delivered and used appropriately.

The Holy See emphasizes the importance of the summit, which echoes Pope Francis' warnings about the globalization of indifference. In doing so, it is motivated by a reiterated commitment to protect each and every person from violence and discrimination, to guarantee appropriate and quality health care and to protect those who are vulnerable, particularly women and children.

The Holy See welcomes the agreement for a closer working relationship between the International Organization for Migration and the United Nations, and wishes to express its interest in participating in the continuing efforts of the Global Forum on Migration and Development and the Global Migration Group. We sincerely hope that these initiatives will stimulate better management of person-centered responses to refugee and migrant movements at global, national, and local levels.

Allow me to conclude with some words of Pope Francis that express his message to the summit:

> "I ask leaders and legislators and the entire international community, above all, to confront the reality of those who have been displaced by force, with effective projects and new approaches in order to protect their dignity, to improve the quality of their life and to face the challenges that are emerging from modern forms of persecution, oppression and slavery. They are human people, I stress this, who are appealing for solidarity and assistance, who need urgent action but also, and above all, understanding and kindness."

The Acting Co-Chair: In accordance with resolution 64/3, of 19 October 2009, I now call on the observer for the International Olympic Committee.

Mr. Bach (International Olympic Committee): The International Olympic Committee (IOC) fully supports and congratulates the Member States and the Secretary-General for the adoption of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (resolution 71/1). We welcome the call for civil society to play an important role as a key partner in every region of the world. We at the IOC stand ready to help with a renewed commitment.

The unprecedented scale and magnitude of the global refugee crisis require a concerted effort by the international community to find long-term solutions for this human tragedy. At the IOC, we are developing new plans that will make a real difference in the lives of young people around the world. This unprecedented situation is a moral challenge and a call to action for us all.

That is why, one year ago at the General Assembly, the IOC announced the creation of the first-ever refugee Olympic team at the Olympic games in Rio de Janeiro, in 2016. That team of refugee athletes participated alongside the best 11,000 athletes of the world from all 206 national Olympic committees. They competed not as refugees but as any other Olympic team. Their

participation as a team sent a strong message of solidarity and hope to the millions of refugees around the world. The refugee athletes showed us all that despite the unimaginable tragedies and suffering that they have faced, anyone can contribute to society through their talent, skills and, most importantly, through the strength of their human spirit. Their participation in the Olympic games is proof that refugees are an enrichment to society, just as they are an enrichment to our Olympic family.

I would like to thank the Secretary-General in particular for his great personal commitment, and the High Commissioner for Refugees for his great cooperation. Without such cooperation, that great success would not have been possible. When the Olympic flame was extinguished, the Olympic games ended, but the IOC's support for the refugee athletes goes on. We continue by their side beyond the Olympic games, to help them integrate in their new home countries or to prepare to go back to their countries of origin to contribute to building a better society there.

Sport is a natural partner when it comes to realizing the goals for the social and economic progress of the international community. The historic 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development specifically recognizes sport as an important enabler for promoting peace and understanding. Sport can also be an important enabler for delivering the goals of inclusion for refugees and migrants.

Today, I reiterate our commitment to the international community that we will support the important efforts of the United Nations, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Member States to find sustainable solutions to the refugee crisis. In light of the New York Declaration, we want to strengthen that cooperation with a very concrete proposal — the IOC will build safe places for children to play sports. In cities where there is a displaced migrant populations or in refugee camps, sports can become the glue which will bind communities together. It can break down cultural and gender barriers in a safe environment, promoting social cohesion, peace and equality.

In short, these safe sports environments will be easily adaptable to local areas of need. They can provide not only a platform for all of the benefits that sport can bring but also better opportunities for other civil society actors to do their job, whether it be to provide education or health services. That initiative places sport at the very heart of public policy. In that way, sport can play its part in making the world a better place, and that is what all of us here are committed to doing.

The meeting rose at 5.20 p.m.